

deserving of realisation, but which cling to them through life and, though they may not seriously deflect their energies, give a certain bias to their character and colour to their outlook. With all his dreaminess Disraeli's genius was far too practical to permit him to devote his life to the pursuit of a mere phantom; but it is probable that these early visions never wholly forsook him. They had a soil of genuine racial sentiment from which perennially to spring, and though it would be easy to exaggerate their significance, yet to know them is to get a glimpse into the inmost recesses of Disraeli's mind. Therein lies the value of *Alroy* for us now. Before the novel was published Disraeli boasted to a lady of evangelical turn, who inquired after his spiritual welfare, that it would show he read his Bible. He read his Bible, indeed, though less to edification as his pious friend would have interpreted the word than as a record of exclusive interest to the race to which he belonged. In this esoteric sense *Alroy* is saturated with the language and spirit of the Old Testament; and more than any of Disraeli's works, more even than *Tancred*, it reveals the Hebraic aspect of his many-sided nature.

Apart from this biographic interest not much can be said in commendation of the novel. We are impressed, in the dialogue especially, by the quickness and success with which Disraeli has caught the spirit of the East, but his story as a story never really grips us. The East may give us pictures or the embryonic tales which are little more than pictures; but where events lead to nothing and life is a troubled sea with no definite current setting through it, an historical novel is impossible. The remoteness and unreality of the surroundings destroy the interest for Western readers, and the effect of unreality is increased by the author's too faithful adherence to his Eastern models in the things in which they are least deserving of imitation. In his descriptions he falls into a mechanical magnificence and in his action into a mechanical hyperbole which are certainly in